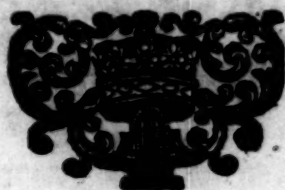


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The Righteousness of Faith explained,

IN A
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT
STANBORN in ESSEX,
July 19, 1750.

By THOMAS MILWAY.



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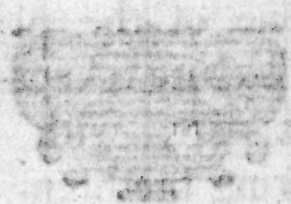
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THE following discourse was first preached at *Haverhill in Suffolk*, to a plain, but a very candid auditory ; where I have the satisfaction of recommending scripture truth, without incurring the censure of betraying it. It was afterwards preached at *Stanborn in Essex*, one of the places where a monthly lecture is kept up, in which I bear a part, with some of my neighbouring brethren. It was one among some discourses preached at my own place, upon the scripture doctrine of justification ; and was composed and preached without the least design of offering it to pub-

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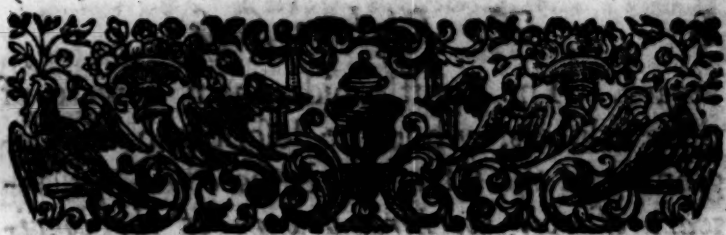
lick view. Some of my friends, where it was last preached, desired a copy of it, upon which it fell into some hands, who thought it might do service to the cause of truth to publish it.

The Text that is here considered, has (I think) been too little understood, and has been applied in a manner never intended by the Apostle. It has been interpreted in a way, that has had too visible a tendency to lessen mens regard for the eternal, immutable law of righteousness. If the following discourse shall be thought to give a scripture view of the argument which the words contain, there will need no apology for the publication of it.

Haverhill.
Nov. 9, 1750.

T. M.

PHILIP.



PHILIPP. iii. 9.

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.



It was the design of several of St. Paul's Epistles to show that faith in Christ, or subjection to him, was alone required in order to our justification ; and that Christians have nothing to do with the rituals of the law of *Moses*. For many of the Jews who did imbrace the Christian faith, yet insisted that the law of *Moses* was in force, and that obedience to it was necessary to Salvation.

This the Apostle opposes in almost all his Epistles, and this I would observe is the chief argument of this Chapter. There were many who were for mingling Judaism and Christianity together ; these boasted that they were circumcised, and that they kept the law, and were the occasion of great disturbance to the Gentile converts, who were taught to pay it no regard.

6 *The Righteousness*

regard. The Apostle bids them beware of these seducers, whom he describes in the beginning of the Chapter, *Beware of Dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.* The Apostle does not call them the circumcision, but adds, *we are the Circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, who rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.* And that they might not think he spoke against those things in which the Jews trusted out of envy, he shewed, that in regard to a punctual observance of the law of Moses, none had greater reason for confidence than himself.——At the 4th verse, *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh : if any other man thinketh he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.* Then follows a particular account of his own pretensions ; he was *circumcised the eighth day, of the Stock of Israel ;* which was precisely according to the letter of the law ; he descended lineally from Israel, and *was of the tribe of Benjamin,* and so was not a proselyte, but *a Hebrew of the Hebrews.* And as the Jews were divided into several sects, he was of the straitest sect *a Pharisee.* This now was his righteousness as a Jew, which if it afforded any room for glorying, none had greater reason for it than he. Nor was he wanting in his zeal for the law of Moses, that was so great, that it carried him to persecute the church ; nay, so exact was he in that ceremonial righteousness, that

that he was blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; that is, he no sooner became a Christian, but he disclaimed all trust in those things, he once esteemed the only ground of his confidence and hope—and this he did for Christ's sake, and that he might depend wholly on him, reckoning they would be a prejudice to him if he depended any longer upon them. *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.* Nay, he declares it as his settled conviction, that those things in which he trusted were loss and damage, compared with the knowledge of Christ and his Gospel, of which he was a Preacher and an Apostle; for which he gave up all his former pretensions, and did count them but dung, (things of no value) that he might win Christ; that is, might obtain an interest in him, and in the blessings which God by Christ Jesus has promised unto every Christian. Then follow the words of the Text, *And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*—All I intend from these words, is to show,

What is that righteousness which the Apostle disclaims.

And what the righteousness in which he desired to be found.

I. What is that righteousness which the Apostle here disclaims? And that is *his own righteousness*.

And here I would enquire into the meaning of this righteousness, and how we are to understand the Apostle when he disclaims it.

—What is that righteousness of which the Apostle speaks? This will appear by its being *the righteousness that is of the law*. It is as plain as can be, that hereby he intends his former righteousness as a Jew; that is, those ceremonial observances in which the Jews trusted. His own righteousness was that of which he had been speaking, which if it had been any ground of confidence, none could have had more reason for glorying than he, *for if any man has whereof he may trust in the flesh, I more. Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the righteousness that is of the law, blameless.* This was his former righteousness as a Jew, and that now he disclaims.

Whoever reads the passage, and considers the connection of the words, must see, that they refer to that. It was in this manner the Jews sought for righteousness, by the works of the law of Moses. And this it is the Apostle opposes, in almost all his Epistles, especially in those to the Romans and Galatians,

Galatians, where he shows that the law (that is the law of Moses) was set aside, and that whosoever sought to be justified by the law, was fallen from Grace (had renounced the Gospel). Nothing can I think be plainer, than that the Apostle, when he speaks of his own righteousness, which he disclaims, can have no reference at all to the unchangeable law of righteousness, godliness and charity, &c. which Christianity, or the grace of God that bringeth salvation, was designed to teach us. And yet some, without any regard to the plain meaning of the Apostle, have represented this passage, as referring to that piety and godliness, which the scriptures, and especially the Gospel, every where speak of as absolutely necessary to salvation. Did the Apostle in the least refer to this, there might be reason to apply it, as some have done, to works of piety and righteousness; but he never once hints at any such thing. He speaks only of that righteousness that the Jews gloried in, and in which none had been more punctual and exact than he. It was of an external nature, mere rituals, that had no intrinsic worth, or goodness to recommend them; "Such as the rite of circumcision, his descent from *Israel*, his being of the tribe of Benjamin, his zeal for the law of Moses, and his persecuting the Christians." This was the righteousness of which he speaks; and which as a Christian he desired for ever to renounce. I shall not stand to refer you

to other passages. This is sufficient to explain what the Apostle intends, by *his own righteousness*.—And yet this, which is the plain sense of the Apostle, has been strangely overlooked. Nay, this passage is continually quoted, as a proof that the works of piety and righteousness are of no manner of importance to our final acceptance with God.

—A notion absolutely destructive of all Religion, and that never once entered into the Apostle's thoughts. If the Apostle may be allowed to explain his own meaning, his words can never be applied to such a sense as this. It is granted, that no works of ours can properly merit any thing at the hands of God. But if he has connected eternal life with a faith that works by love, with a sincere endeavour to do the will of God, (which he certainly has) what authority have any, from this, or any other passage, to represent them as what are to be entirely set aside, as of no manner of importance to our acceptance with God? If it can be made appear that the Apostle, in this famous passage, refers to any such thing; or that he intends any righteousness but that he once had as a Jew, we are ready to give up the cause. But if it appears (which it does with the highest evidence) that it was only a legal, ceremonial righteousness, that he refers to, let this passage never more be made use of, to set aside the absolute necessity of evangelical righteousness.

righteousness, in order to our final acceptance and salvation.

Having shown what the Apostle intends by his own righteousness, it is easy to apprehend what he intends by disclaiming of it.—It does not signify, as some pretend, that he only disclaims it in point of Justification; he does it absolutely and without reserve. It was a righteousness intirely set aside by the Gospel of Christ, and that he was now under no manner of obligation to. Nay, we find the Apostle often opposing the performing any of those rights, as what laid them under obligation to the whole law. It was a righteousness that he gave up intirely, and that he had no more concern with. But can this be said of the unchangeable law of piety and righteousness? No; that is of perpetual, immutable obligation. And so far was it from being the design of the Gospel to set that aside, that it was the great end and design of it, to inforce and recommend it, to teach men to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

Thus much for the first thing I proposed to show, *viz.* What is that righteousness which the Apostle absolutely disclaims.

II. I come now to show, what is that righteousness in which he desired to be found. It is described under the following terms,

that which is by the faith of Christ, the righteousness that is of God by faith.

Here I will enquire, (1.) What this righteousness is. (2.) Show that this is what the Apostle establishes, in opposition to that ceremonial righteousness, he formerly trusted in as a Jew. (3.) Point out the suitability of this, in order to our Justification.

Let us first enquire, what this righteousness is, of which the Apostle speaks. My Text tells us, it is *the righteousness of faith*, which the Apostle throughout his Epistles opposes to that legal righteousness, in which the Jews trusted. It is that (the Apostle tells us, Rom. iii. 22.) *which is to all, and upon all them that believe.* It is that which was intended to come in the room of the law of Moses, and which was to be the condition of our obtaining righteousness and life.

In the Epistles of St. Paul we often find *law* and *faith* opposed to one another.——The first of these denotes the law of Moses, which was ineffectual to Justification — and the other, namely *faith*, denotes the Gospel of Christ, and the method of pardon and salvation which that reveals. Now when the Apostle speaks in the Text, of *righteousness by the faith of Christ*, he means our obtaining it by believing and obeying the Gospel; in opposition to that vain expedient of the Jews, who sought for righteousness by the works of the ceremonial law.——If it be enquired, how we obtain righteousness by faith?

faith? To this I answer, that we do so, in the same sense that the Jews sought to obtain it by the law of Moses. It was by submitting to that, from which they looked for acceptance with God. And consequently, *the righteousness of faith* intends a willing and hearty subjection to Christ Jesus, and those terms of acceptance which he has revealed.—This is that righteousness, by the faith of Christ, which the Apostle speaks of; and *the righteousness that is of God by faith*, i. e. which God was pleased to appoint, and require, in order to our Justification. God determined to appoint this method, viz. our believing on his son Jesus Christ, to be the means of our obtaining righteousness and life. And I shall afterwards show the wisdom of this appointment as it was alike suited to the condition both of Jews and Gentiles.—But here it may be asked “Does not the Apostle, when he speaks “ of righteousness, by the faith of Christ, intend the *Righteousness of Jesus Christ*?” To which I answer, that the *Righteousness of faith*, and the *Righteousness of Christ*, are ever spoke of as two different things.—*The righteousness of faith* is something required of us; and is that evangelical righteousness, which is substituted in the room of that required by the law of Moses.—Now the *righteousness of Christ* is quite another thing. It is the Mediator’s own righteousness, or his doing and suffering all that was necessary to the carrying

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ing on, and completing the great work of our redemption. But this is never once called by the Apostle, *the righteousness of faith*. Christ, by his obedience and sufferings, wrought out a righteousness, the benefits of which will redound to all who believe, and obey the Gospel. The perfect supereminent righteousness of the son of God, or his obedience to the Father's Will in the most difficult instances, was the ground of his advancement to the right-hand of God. And it is through him we are accepted as righteous in the sight of God.

So that let none think, that we exclude the obedience and righteousness of Christ from being the means of our Pardon and Justification; him we regard as the author of eternal salvation; but then he is so, to those only who believe in and obey him. But *though the righteousness of Christ* is that to which we would ever pay a sacred regard, yet *the righteousness of faith* is in scripture spoken of as a different thing. It is that upon which we may apply to ourselves that eternal life, which Christ Jesus by suffering and dying for us is impowered to bestow.—To establish this, as the proper sense and meaning of the Text, I might go over all the places, where *the righteousness of faith* is spoken of; and show, that it cannot, in any of those places, intend what is usually called *the righteousness of Jesus Christ*. Thus the Apostle speaks of Circumcision, which *Abraham* received as a
seal

seal of the righteousness of faith, Rom. iv. 11. and it is said in the 13th verse, that the promise that he should be the Heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith; that very faith, which the Apostle tells us was imputed to him for righteousness: and in the 9th chapter, and 30th verse, What shall we say then? that the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith? The meaning of which is, " that the
" Gentiles, who were quite sunk into idola-
" try and vice, and made no pretences to
" the favour of God, from any performances
" of theirs; yet had attained to that righ-
" teousness, which will be accepted in
" order to Justification, even a sincere faith
" in the Messiah, arising from a firm trust
" in the truth and faithfulness of God." So
again chapter x. verse 10. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. The plain meaning of which passage is, that we are made righteous by believing, or by that method the Gospel prescribes.—It is the same with what the Apostle calls the righteousness of God, Rom. i. 17. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the just shall live by faith; that is, in the Gospel of Christ we are acquainted what is that righteousness which God has appointed, and which he will accept

cept of ; *that it is all of Faith*, which they would be intuled to by believing, or by submitting to the Gospel of Christ, and the terms of acceptance that are there revealed. In the same sense we are to understand the Apostle, chapter x. verse 3. *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.* Of whom does the Apostle here speak ; but of the Jews ? And what was their own righteousness, which they endeavoured to establish ; and for which they had a mighty zeal, but the rituals of the law of Moses ? *The righteousness of God* which the Apostle opposes to this, and which they were ignorant of, was the method appointed of God for the obtaining righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ, who was the end of the law for righteousness unto all them that believe ; and which in the 6th verse the Apostle calls *the righteousness of faith* ; the very same he here calls *the righteousness of God*.

Now this is quite a different thing from what the Apostle speaks of, chapter v. verse 18. when he says, *By the righteousness of one*, (or by one act of righteousness) *the free gift came upon all to justification of life*. There the Apostle, indeed, speaks of the *righteousness of Christ*, or his obedience to the death, through which we are restored to the hope of eternal life.—But this is no where called *the righteousness of God*, or *the righteousness of faith*. So that, though I would pay the utmost

most regard to the merit and righteousness of Jesus Christ, and would direct others to pay the highest regard to it, yet it is manifest in every passage, where the Apostle speaks of *the righteousness of faith*, he means our believing in Christ; which the Apostle establishes as the indispensable term of our acceptance with God.

If it be asked, Why is it called *the righteousness of faith*? The answer is easy; because it relates to Christ Jesus and his Gospel, which are the objects of the Christian's faith.

—The great arguments and motives to obedience are taken from things that are yet invisible; and that he is conversant with only by believing. It is not that there is any peculiar merit in believing; or that this, beyond any thing else, has any peculiar efficacy in it. For mere belief will turn to no account at all. Faith without works is dead and unprofitable; and cannot, therefore of itself, claim any superior regard from God. It is called *the righteousness of faith*, as it stands opposed to the righteousness of the law of Moses.—Or it may be thus called, as faith, where it is sincere and effectual, becomes an inward principle, disposing to every other branch of righteousness and goodness. *Without faith it is impossible to please God.* Religion has its foundation in the belief of God, his being and attributes; and the Christian religion is founded in the belief of Christ and his Gospel;

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pel; which, where ever it is a true and genuine faith, produces those fruits of righteousness, which are, by Christ Jesus, to the praise and glory of God.

Thus much for what we are to understand by what the Apostle calls *the righteousness of faith*.

I proceed now (2.) to show that this is what the Apostle endeavours to establish, in opposition to that ceremonial righteousness, in which the Jews trusted.

That they were to look for Justification, by the faith of Christ, and not from their obedience to that positive law given to the Jews, is the great subject of which the Apostle treats in several of his Epistles, especially in those to the Romans and Galatians. This he establishes from various topics, which he largely insists upon in those Epistles. He does it,

By showing first, that *the law of Moses* was set aside, and that *faith* (or the Gospel) was substituted in the room of it. *The law was but a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith. And before faith came* (says the Apostle, i. e. before the Gospel came) *we were shut up unto the faith that should afterwards be revealed.* The law of Moses was only a temporary appointment. *It was added because of transgression, till the seed should come, i. e. till Christ should come, to whom the promise was made.* Gal. iii. 19.

He farther establishes it, by showing that the law bound men over to condemnation and death. It was a severe and rigorous discipline. It threatned death to every transgression. Could they have yielded perfect obedience to it, they had been justified according to the tenour of it ; but this morally speaking was impossible. On the contrary, it declared that *the soul that sinned should dye*. The Apostle therefore shows, that faith in Christ, (a way more easy and practicable) was now revealed. On account of which, the Gospel, that contains this method, is called *the ministration of life* ; as the law was *the ministration of condemnation, or death*. In this light the Apostle represents the case Rom. iii. 20. *Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. For by the law is the knowledge of sin ; but now the righteousness of God without the law is manifest, being witnessed to by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference. By the righteousness of God without the law*, the Apostle plainly intends the righteousness of faith ; and his meaning is, that this righteousness God will accept, in the room of that perfect obedience which the law required. It implies in it that sincere and effectual faith, whereupon God will pronounce them righteous, without making any difference betwixt Jews and Gentiles. And in the following verse, the Apo-

He calls it the *law of faith*, as opposed to the *law of works*, and adds at the 28th verse, *Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law, i. e. by faith in Christ (or by the Gospel method) without the works of the law of Moses.*

I might further observe, that the Apostle establishes this, that is faith in Christ, as the way that God has appointed for obtaining righteousness, by referring to the Case of *Abraham*, who, before ever the law was given to the Jews, was in this manner declared *righteous*, namely, *by his faith*. For the *faith of Abraham was counted to him for righteousness*, Rom. iv. 3. And the Apostle shows, in like manner at the 5th verse, *that to him who worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*. By *him that worketh not*, the Apostle by no means intends one who never performs any act of righteousness or holiness, but him, who does not look for acceptance with God upon the foot of the law of Moses, or covenant of works, but believes in Christ, with that sincere and effectual faith already described.

And this was the case with *Abraham*, who though once an Idolater, yet upon account of his unshaken faith and obedience, was accepted of God.—This is that righteousness, which the Apostle establishes in opposition to that legal, ceremonial righteousness, in which the Jews trusted; and which was once the matter

matter of his own confidence. That former righteousness he now absolutely disclaims, and desires to be found believing in Christ, or submitting to his Gospel, in order to his obtaining righteousness and life. The case of *Abraham*, from whence the Apostle argues, makes it evident (I think) beyond dispute, that the righteousness, in which he desired to be found, was the *righteousness of faith, which is to all, and upon all them that believe*; it is that very faith, which the Apostle says, *will be imputed to us for righteousness, if we believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our Justification*. This is what the Apostle endeavours to establish. And I cannot but think, the sense I have given of this Text is the true one. If it is not, I confess I shall for ever despair at coming at the Apostle's meaning.

I proceed now to show the suitableness of this in order to our Justification. In the first place, this is suitable to the condition and circumstances of mankind as sinners. The whole world were guilty before God. Mankind had broke the original law of innocence, and therefore could not obtain righteousness and life, upon the foot of the covenant of works. Of this sort was the law of Moses; and though it was consistent with the wisdom of God, to appoint it for the time then being, yet Justification and Life could not be obtained upon the terms of it.

it. Had it been so, no other expedient would have been pitched upon, *For*, saith the Apostle, *Gal. iii. 21. if there had been a law given, that could have given life, verily righteousness had come by the law.* This being the case, it was necessary to have recourse to some other expedient, such as the wisdom of God thought fit to appoint. And that is *faith in Christ*, or an hearty subjection to the Gospel, and those gracious terms that are there revealed. And in the Gospel, repentance is taken in together with faith in Christ, each of which to prove them genuine, must issue in obedience. And as this is the method, which the wisdom and mercy of God has pitched upon, so it is admirably suited to the condition and circumstances of fallen man. Hereby the terms of acceptance are suited to the weak and frail condition of our natures, and are therefore worthy of all acceptation.

Secondly. This method of obtaining righteousness by *faith*, has a manifest suitableness in it, as it is alike adapted to the case of *Jews and Gentiles*. The law of Moses was calculated only for the Jews; it was a covenant of peculiarity, that God entered into only with that people. The rest of mankind had no interest in the priviledges of that dispensation; and the Jews were so vain as to think, they only were the favourites of heaven, and were for confining the mercies of God to themselves. — But the law could not justify

fy them. For they, as well as others, had transgressed it. Nay, both Jews and Gentiles were sinners before God ; and it argued amazing mercy and goodness in God, to pitch upon another expedient, wherein he might, in one common way, have mercy upon both. *For the righteousness of God, (or that which he has appointed by faith in Jesus Christ) is to all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference ; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* And the fitness, the propriety of this, the Apostle argues, from the common relation in which God stood to mankind as their creator : *Is he the God of the Jews only ? Is he not also the God of the Gentiles ? Yes, he is the God of the Gentiles also.*—By faith in Christ Jesus, all are intitled to the same privileges and blessings. Faith is now imputed for righteousness to all without distinction. Jews and Gentiles have hereupon the same claim, founded in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, to pardon and eternal life. *For there is no difference betwixt the Jew and the Greek : for the same Lord over all is rich in mercy to all that call upon him ; for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* And herein was displayed the wisdom, as well as goodness of God. *All were concluded under sin, that he might have mercy upon all.* Rom. xi. 32. And, in the next verse, he breaks out in admiration of the wisdom of God, *O, the depths both of the*
wisdom

wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !

Thirdly. God was pleased to pitch upon this method, of imputing faith for righteousness, that his mercy and grace might more fully appear.

Had the Jews obtained righteousness by the law of works, they would have had whereof to glory: or had any of the sons of men by obedience to that law which they were under, obtained righteousness, there had been room for boasting. But all mankind had violated the respective laws which they were under, and were liable to condemnation. *For the law (i. e. the breach of it) worketh wrath; and the Apostle adds, therefore it is of faith, that it may be by grace.* The righteousness of faith to which the blessing is annexed, God is pleased to accept in the room of that perfect obedience which the law required. So that the whole appears a grant of mercy and favour. That our faith in Christ, and subjection to him, should be accepted in order to Justification, was a merciful appointment of God; and for which we must for ever hold ourselves indebted to his grace. *For where is boasting? It is excluded. By what law; of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.* It is not that our faith, be it ever so sincere, can deserve that Justification which is annexed to it. God, of his mere mercy and grace, has established this connection. We must therefore

therefore conclude, *that by Grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.*

In the last place. This is a method which at the same time that it tends to keep us humble, lays foundation for a joyful confidence in the mercy of God.

The penitent sinner has hereupon the strongest assurance of pardon and peace with God. And this may convey that satisfaction which nothing else can yield. It may relieve him under a consciousness of guilt, that if he returns to God by repentance, and with that faith which issues in obedience to the commands of God, he shall not come into condemnation. *For being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. v. 1, &c.* And at the 10th and 11th verse. *For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have received the atonement.* Thus I have considered what I proposed from the words, and shall conclude with some Application.

(1.) Since the righteousness which the Apostle disclaims, was his former righteousness as a Jew, let none take occasion from this passage to depretiate real holiness, which must be of the utmost importance to our acceptance with God. — To merit at the

hands of God, by any thing that we can do, is a vain pretence. What proportion can there be, between the best of our services, and that eternal life, which the Gospel promises? And yet the practice of righteousness is absolutely necessary to our final blessedness.—But the importance of it has been greatly lessened, by representing it as having no influence upon our final acceptance with God.

Will it suffice to say, “that it is necessary,” and yet speak of it in terms that unavoidably lead to a low and slender sense of the importance of it? Cannot we pay all due regard to the death of Christ, his mediation, (through which alone we are accepted of God) and yet assert the importance of holiness, in order to our interest in the benefits and blessings he has graciously promised?

Is it enough to say, “that the law of righteousness is, indeed, a rule of life,” and then represent it as not worth *a cup of cold water*, as a dead letter, and tell men they must renounce it? — Declaim upon the danger and hazard of maintaining too high a regard for that which is the glory of a man, the chief excellence and ornament of a Christian? — Is there no medium between meriting at the hands of God, claiming heaven as a valuable consideration for our services, and telling men, “they are of no importance to their securing a title to it”? — Sure it is easy to
steer

steer between these two extremes. It is the misunderstanding such a passage, that has lead many to degrade *moral righteousness*; nor is it difficult, by the wrong application of such a Text, to work up some sort of people to a sovereign contempt of it.

And what had laid the foundation for this? But speaking in the same lessening, despicable terms of piety and righteousness, that the Apostle every where does of the rites and ceremonies of the law of *Moses*.

But can it be thought that this is right? Surely there is a material difference betwixt that legal ceremonial righteousness, in which the Jews trusted, and that Piety, Godliness and Charity, which it is the great design of Christianity to improve and cultivate. Do we think our blessed Lord had such low thoughts of it, when we find him, in his excellent sermon upon the mount, from the beginning to the end of it, pressing upon men a regard for the eternal law of righteousness, as absolutely necessary to any hopes of happiness—telling them, that *except their righteousness exceeded the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they should in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.*—This was the law that Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil.—He has taken it into his religion; and this, together with faith in him, is that evangelical righteousness, to which the promise of eternal life in Christ Jesus is every where made. Did our blef-

fed Lord use that caution that many do (who would be thought the best expounders of his mind and will) in speaking of the necessity of good works, when in the 25th chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, he shows men will at the last day be dealt with, according to the prevalence of the amiable temper and spirit of the Gospel; and that they will be acquitted hereafter, not so much upon the score of their faith, as of their charity?

And what if *St Paul*, arguing against the Jews, tells them, that the law (of Moses) *was a dead letter, a yoke of bondage, &c.* is it not strangely to pervert his meaning to understand it of the eternal, immutable law of God, the practice of which can never be dispensed with, but is of the utmost importance to his acceptance? Not that we would build men up in pride and presumption; but sure we may show the necessity of holiness to salvation without this. We still acknowledge that we are unprofitable servants; that eternal life is the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ; and that our obedience is acceptable to God, and will finally be rewarded, only through him, the one only Mediator between God and man. — These are perfectly consistent with one another. An holy temper, a pious and godly life, may be required as the conditions of happiness, as the measure according to which it will be bestowed, while the benefit

nefit itself is gratuitous, and flows from the original mercy and love of God.—We may show the necessity of an inherent righteousness, to qualify for the favour of God, and eternal life, and yet insist that it is through the merit and mediation of Christ that we are accepted to happiness.

—And this is agreeable to the Gospel-Scheme ; which though it does honour to the grace of God, and leads us to a high regard for the mediation of Christ, yet declares we shall be dealt with according to our works, *that not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will my father who is in heaven—that Christ Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to them who obey him—and that blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life.*

(2.) Since it was a righteousness merely ritual, and external, that the Apostle disclaims, we learn the inefficacy of this, in order to our acceptance with God.

—There was nothing the Apostle more warmly opposed, than men placing confidence in this. The religion of Jesus recommends itself to us from the purity and spirituality of it. And Christianity, (I mean that which is truly such) consists in the practice of real undissembled goodness. That teaches us that no privilege of descent or birth, no external advantages
whatever

whatever will avail, where purity of heart and life are wanting. *The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost. For he who in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.* It is impossible for any in a worse manner to deceive themselves, than by building upon this or the other external advantage which they think they enjoy above others; they are no further to be valued than as a mean of promoting the practice of real goodness. Without this, they will encrease their guilt, and aggravate their condemnation. No party considerations can in the least avail with him, who is the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness, and whose countenance beholds the upright. It is not a zealous attachment to particular forms or rites of worship, nor the warmest opposition to them, that can recommend us to his regards; it is not the being of this or the other communion, that will at all avail to our acceptance, without inward holiness, and such a conversation as becomes the Gospel. Men may set a high value upon these things, and place them instead of real piety and virtue; but it is the most dangerous delusion in all the world. With a righteous and impartial God, nothing will stand the test, but the steady uniform practice of righteousness. It is not the soundest faith, nor the warmest zeal for truth itself, that

that will meet with the least regard from God, separate from a life of goodness.— Without a faith that works by love, we are nothing in God's account, whatever we are in our own.—It is a temper and life formed upon the amiable temper and spirit of the Gospel, that can give us any claim to the character or the hopes of Christians. Love to God, and universal love and charity to all men, is the very genius of the Gospel; and without which, it has never answered its main end and design upon us.

Let us not place any dependence upon the out-works, the mere appendages of religion, but strive to excell in every virtue; then it will appear that our faith is a genuine, vital principle, which we shall feel the comfort of ourselves, and that will be found to praise, and honour, and glory at the solemn appearing of Jesus Christ.

F I N I S.

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